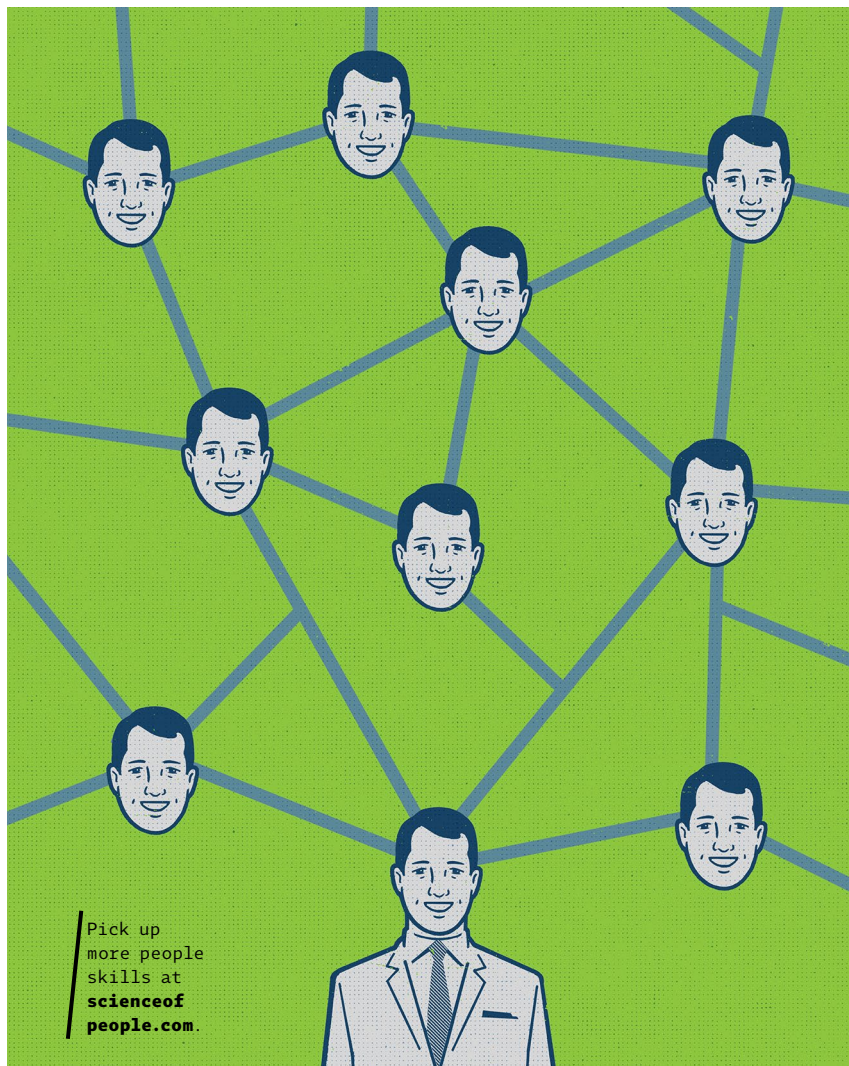


Master the Art (and Science) of Networking

Behavior expert Vanessa Van Edwards reveals the secrets to making better connections.



How can body language improve first impressions?

“Humans mirror each other, so indicate the body language you want to see and the other person is more likely to reciprocate,” says Vanessa Van Edwards, author of *Captivate: The Science of Succeeding with People*. “When we feel good about someone, we angle our toes, shoulders, and head toward them. We also make more eye contact, which produces oxytocin in the brain—a

feeling of connection—and makes the person think, *This is someone I could be friends with.*”

What’s the best way to work a room at a networking event?

“The space can be divided into zones. Most people think they should stand at the start zone near the entrance because they’ll be a ‘welcomer,’ but that’s a mistake. We need to get our bearings before we start socializing. The best zone is near the bar. After getting a drink, there’s a moment of panic when people turn to face the room and are looking for someone to talk to. If you’re nearby and can casually strike up a conversation, then you’re a social savior.”

Any tips for avoiding small talk?

“People have the same social discussions on autopilot—I call it the ‘social script.’ Instead of asking, ‘How are you?’ I start with ‘What was the highlight of your day?’ or ‘Working on anything exciting lately?’ It catches people a little off guard, but in a pleasant way.”

What’s the key to a graceful exit?

“Your first impression is important, but so is your last. There are two tricks I use. Ask about their future plans and respond with something like ‘That sounds wonderful. I hope you have a lovely time. Great talking to you.’ Or you can mention an article you said you would send them, get their business card to set up coffee, or offer to connect them with someone else. Wrapping up with an action step indicates that the conversation is ending.”